



**calvert**

COVER BY CHARLIE SLEICHTER

*for Reed Whitemore*



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**calvert**

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## ONE NIGHT STAND

When you awoke  
I had already been forgotten  
and you left me  
with nothing  
save the feel of naked air  
on my palm  
and a silver goodbye grin  
gliding out the door.

I watched you drive away  
for a long time.

But in the dead walk  
to my sleeping kitchen  
I realized that hating you  
would be as pointless  
as despising the moon  
which, circling blindly  
in the night  
causes the sea to shudder  
and gasp on the shore  
yet is itself unaffected  
by the changing of the tide.

--Ricky Rankin

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## THE PRINCE DEPOSED

After the revolution, he is bitter.  
He will not speak to serfs.  
They humiliate him in the public square,  
forcing him to perform indecent acts  
with children and goats.  
Murder is his only absolution,  
and the murder of a whole country  
is impossible.

He can never return to the room of his birth,  
to lay for a moment on the great bed,  
piled with quilts, enveloped in linen and silk,  
made warm by his mother, the queen,  
because the castle is crowded with serfs,  
cluttering the spacious ballrooms,  
spilling into the corridors,  
hanging their wet rags on clotheslines  
from chandelier to chandelier.

He refuses to speak or clothe himself.  
Now he is invulnerable.  
Gradually, the children forget to torment him.  
A gypsy teaches him to juggle.  
He learns to turn apples into human heads  
in the air.  
He turns the new breasts of a girl  
into hedge-hogs,  
which hide themselves in the forest.

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He turns an apple into a sword  
just as it reaches its arc  
over a boy's head.

He turns the moon into a beehive  
which descends on the town,  
stinging all the good folk, the dogs,  
the livestock.

He turns the stars into a net  
which falls to the ground  
and pins them down.

In the end, he lives happily ever after,  
cleaning the walls of each room  
in his own sweet time,  
reclaiming himself to the chorus of anguish  
from the lawns, the fields, the public places,  
the bees buzzing.

He finds his family crest  
and takes two weeks to clean it.  
He picks his way through the people,  
prying the jewels from their clenched fists.  
He marries a beautiful princess  
and each night they walk above the bodies  
in their flowing robes.

In the spring, the bodies become wheat.  
They have a son.

--Edward Gold

## PERSPECTIVE

Mathematicians tell us  
parallel lines never  
converge in space  
and time; they must wait  
until infinity; yet  
the artist paints them  
as if they are already  
there. He sees the place  
where they  
fall together like lovers or  
wings closed by death.

--Patricia Gayet

## TRIEBE

The forest has released its flock of birds.  
The ring-necked geese travel deep south  
Toward a point hanging in the sky  
Like a jewel or the crux of paradox.

They imply: Divine Mover and Divinely Moved.  
Fact: In 1970 a flock of geese  
Was assumed into the engine of a jet.  
Come evening the sky rained feathers and bone.

It is winter now; white and airy.  
Wind blows the day to its knees.  
The trees are hung with stars and planets  
And dreams torque in the heart.

The woods are heavy with heroin feathers,  
Space-flying sleep and starred brain  
Where stars are the souls of ancient reptiles  
Roaring like sirens the last Ice Age.

At the core of movement underground  
The waters still, swell and split,  
The Dynasoar wind, manned with snow  
Shoots up the veins of trees. Best Wishes.

Then April: mumbling like an alarm  
Clock ringing through a time warp.  
Day lifts up, unlids its eyes  
And the stars go back to their caves.

--Patrick McGrath

## TO AN ORCHID, AND ASIDE

Labellum.  
Labellum forbidden.  
Come intricate lip,  
Come concubine.  
I burn as lures: moist,  
Apparent, pulled as untucked.

Moan my name.

Sly offspring, spurred as feared:  
Who will roll in your corolla,  
Taste your two hairs?

She is more than star  
And needs none.  
Witness her ripe compendium,  
Swelled as lolled forth,  
Brazen as blushing,  
Single as shade.

--Desiré Weidaw

# THE ELEPHANT KILL

The great gray bulk of wrinkled flesh was still, lifeless upon decaying leaves. The torso rose mounded against the tortured landscape of splintered trees. The legs, recumbent or erected horizontally in pairs, extended like tree trunks, but the trunk itself was severed and lay scarlet-tipped, limp beside curved tusks of pale ivory.

The tall African who subdued the massive beast strutted among admiring villagers clustered about the kill; pointed with pride to the cone-shaped temple hole where he had cut the tenderest flesh. Charred, powdered, mixed with oil, the solution rendered him invisible while he pursued the great bull's mate. Savoring his words he reenacted the drama of the hunt and told how he had camouflaged himself in river reeds to escape the female's fury.

**In Chicago the natives eliminate thirteenth floors, chain car keys to rabbits' feet and refused to walk beneath ladders on the street.**

Yelesani, waist-bare and wet-washed with sweat, leaped upon the broad belly and paused for balance, a glistening statue of living obsidian. With rippling arm-muscles he raised his ancient ax and hacked a cross upon the mammoth's rump, peeled back the infested skin, exposing clean white membrane underneath. He placed the leathery side in metered squares against the ground and stacked upon it precious strips of red striated meat.

Other workers joined him two by two, hacking other crosses in their turn. They carved the loin and stripped the collar bone; exposed the vertebrae and picked the flesh away. Pwitika action cut a thin clean line, sliding easily from testicles to throat. Internal pressure forced the entrails out; and while the juices oozed, the topside crew disengaged the ribs. Yelesani helped arrange the viscera lovingly in a loose mass upon the ground; stood blood-smeared and smiling amid the stench and slime, satisfied.

**In New York my uncle eats meat at every meal from animals he has not touched or seen. He worries about his weight; he is always hungry.**

Women and children gathered a modest distance from the kill, garrulous with socializing. They built small-twigg fires among the jagged rocks and carried river water in clay pots from Lutumbwe. Tezewanthu, wife of Yelesani, watched her husband hack the mammoth's trunk in even chunks and sent her daughter scurrying to his side. The child returned, clutching the bloody meat dripping against her distended belly; she had not tasted meat for many months.



The entrails lay like logs among the stomach ensilage. Workmen eased the contents out. Chopped to pot-sized pieces, they took the prize for chit-terlings. The widows waited for liver. Begging and clucking they rushed the two men straining to lift the pole-sized organ bunched brown and blossoming on its huge stem. Yelesani, tired from work and weak from hunger, threaded chunks of leg meat on his pwitika, sent his daughter to cook them at the fire but could not wait. He ate raw meat; sweat and juices dripped from his elbow.

**In Baltimore my cousins slice sirloins with keen serrated blades and grow pale at the sight of blood.**

Night moves in quickly near the equator, progressing purposefully like some living thing. Yelesani took his turn standing watch for leopards and hyenas; guarded the sprawled carcass, half-consumed and scarlet against the raw night. Men squatted to feed the flickering fire beneath an inclined sappling frame, sagging under the weight of strips of coarse-grained meat. Pale smoke curled upward, lingered at the edge, and drifting through the crevices of flesh, disappeared into the night.

Small cooking fires glowed like tiny eyes of the forest. Tezewanthu cooked trunk meat for her husband, fed her children and settled her body to fit the shape of the earth, resting her head on dark volcanic stone. In the far distance an elephant trumpeted; a hyena whined. Feeling secure in her husband's watchfulness, she slept soundly to wild forest whispers.

**In Los Angeles my sister tosses on her beauty mattress. Her husband sleeps beside her, quiet with tranquilizers.**

At sunrise Yelesani helped the workers brush insects away and turn the carcass to the uncarved side. Nature's rhythmic symmetry demanded repetition of some tasks: the crosses hacked, the skin detached, the stripping of the loin and neck and spine, and finally, the picking of the bones...The joyful celebration of the day before simmered to weariness as people drifted home.

Yelesani was among the last to go. The sun had passed its zenith when he gathered up his tools, helped Tezewanthu lift the basket rich with meat upon her head, and according to his custom, led the way. Tezewanthu trudged silent mile on silent mile staring at her husband's back, planning piece by piece the finished drying of the meat upon a fence-wire grill, leaving behind her only the memory of a few scattered bones to bleach universal in the sun.

**In New Mexico anthropology students excavate the decaying bones of my evolutionary ancestors probing for points of light within universal dark.**

--Stacy Tuthill

## SALT WATER TAFFY

So much to join  
and you join, and they have you  
on a list and they send you  
mail with your name all wrong

so no, I say, I don't want to.  
I don't want to belong.

Belonging is a confection  
I press my nose to the glass for,  
as I do for the pretty boxes of  
pink, green and yellow  
pastels in crisp white  
twists of waxed paper  
they sell in the shops at the shore.

I buy some each year  
and each year  
beside the deep aquamarine  
of the sea unwrap a mint green,  
toss it onto my tongue  
and discover once more

it has little more taste than a tear.

--Jean Morgan

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## MY BOSS THINKS I'M GREAT

Charlie, you always want to go just when the cat is sleeping on my feet. You always have some place to go. Charlie, you always have to leave saying you have to paint the trim. A mistress doesn't need to be first and foremost but you always want to leave. All the muscles in my stomach have been removed and put back in place. I use Garden Joy. My legs under the cat are smooth. Smooth. You're just like the girls at work. They steal my counter rags, then they leave and go home. I never have anything to mop up with. They always say they don't steal the counter rags. But they do. Merv Griffin, I have a secret. I've always thought of you when Charlie screws me. Where do you always go, Merv?

--Grace Cavalieri

Some air has gone  
inside a barn  
with a belief in  
physical laws.

A fluid always  
takes the shape  
of its container  
it says

then learns a  
human geometry.

Later the air  
gives a lesson  
in the loft:

Silence is what  
silence does

it says as it  
is passing through.

--David Hickman

## VALEDICTION

"Il arrivait que Gilberte me laissait aller  
sans elle, et je m'avancais, laissant mon  
ombre derrière moi, comme une barque qui  
poursuit sa navigation à travers des étendues  
enchantées;...."

--Marcel Proust

The cinctures of the wind have loosed and fell  
So torrents spill across a gusty sky.  
The constellations dismount the carousel.  
They clash and stagger as it spins by.

He watches with a vandal's fascination  
At cracks that scatter through glass,  
Or like a pilot whose own configurations  
Of stars guide his storm-crossed path.

He paces on the beach, below the night's  
Incendiary, strokes his freshly-razored face,  
Blue by the glow of a match he strikes  
In answer to the blurs of space.

How man takes faith more strangely in himself  
To build beside the ocean. Waters rise  
In on themselves, removing part of all  
They touch: so even in their calmest guise.

The bitter, wind-borne brine will splinter paint  
So that it peels away like feeling from  
A lover too well loved. The tides refrain  
Then resonantly breaks behind the hum.

But somehow then the lights come on  
and a voice is calling, "Honey..."  
and a stiffer, less familiar tone  
proclaims the day is partly sunny.

As a seed is watered  
and nurtured  
she was taught  
and literated.

He hears her summon  
and ponders how he bartered to be wed  
with this woman  
so educated, so well-bred  
who never remembers  
what she's already said.

He did not marry her for lust.  
It was not because  
a quirk of nature said  
he must. He was more easily  
taken.

There was a time at the university  
he could brandish answers  
to match anyone. "Risks," he had  
said, "are all  
that make life  
worth taking."

Now he sips his coffee  
from a spoon  
and pictures himself in heraldry,  
the lion rampant  
on a field of ennui.

Let us go, let us go despite our doubt.  
I shall wear my tee-shirt inside out.

**Manchmal steht einer auf beim Abendbrot  
und geht hinaus, und geht und geht.**

And sometimes he stays at home or goes  
only so far, **weil eine Kirche**, or no  
as the city by subway where  
the man at the next strap  
twitches in rehearsal  
to his boss's stipulations.

At lunch he finds  
himself a bench somewhere,  
snugs his very last vertebrae  
up close, feels  
his back settle chink  
by chink into place.

He reaches into his pocket  
where he keeps his best topics  
and taking pen and notebook says:  
"This will be my poem about death."

One morning when the sun  
is slung across  
the sky, I shoulder myself up  
and pack off with  
a rucksack and the flick  
away of some cigar butt.

Smoke swarms out of  
my lungs. The storm  
door slams behind me  
from on high. But  
I'm not the first  
who left with no more motive  
than a chance to pass  
the towns and people by.

I only stop to watch  
the birds returning west  
and whistle greetings  
in the half-tone light.  
Then I continue without rest  
until the day  
fills quietly up  
with night.

And yet so often he had no more to say  
**le plus souvent elle m'accompagnait.**

--Miles Maguire



## SUICIDE

Towards the end  
you were reducing illusions  
to nothing  
constantly.  
You learned to take power  
from being a stranger  
in this world. For the first time  
your life grew to a point.  
When you decided this was  
a one shot deal --  
nothing hidden or revealed --  
you dismembered your nest  
piece by piece and handed it  
around. When the sirens quit singing  
and they untied your slumping body  
from the mast, someone unleashed the March Winds  
and we --the remaining--  
have been swept away.

--Bill Griffiths

## LOVEYE

he saw it smoking  
like bodies of  
lava

he tried stepping on it  
to put it out once  
and for all

that dog  
that sun  
that clout of love  
staring staring

in a world where everyone  
else is drunk with  
indifference  
and his not wanting to  
be reminded of it

all of those clouds  
all of those reptiles  
grumblings  
discords

and their raising up  
their stones to be  
like themselves

--Robert Bowie

## RAIN AT EDGEWOOD

When you walked off  
into dusty rain  
shoulders squared  
against me  
hat set firmly  
I thought you would walk  
that muddy road forever  
off to meet some horse to kiss  
like Tom Mix in an American epic.  
I thought  
let him walk  
till trees and mud  
engulf him.  
But waiting two hours  
conjured up  
your wandering in a lost meadow  
or your bones bleaching  
on some vertical cliff.

When you drove to the rescue  
in your trusty Chevy truck  
encircled me with a proprietary arm  
I was ready to follow you  
through dusty rain  
down muddy roads  
across stormy meadows  
up impossible cliffs  
till earth ceased its orbit  
and our meteoric dust fell  
on star struck lovers  
in other worlds.

--Doris Mozer

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## JAPANESE LINGERINGS

1.  
The spreaded pink  
Lips of the conch  
Mouth the sea's song.

2.  
Anemone petals  
Unfurl their faces,  
Taste the air.

3.  
Fountains of sound  
Flee through the reeds.

4.  
Festive kimone  
Beat in the wind--  
Furious silk!

--William Gorski

# THE EXECUTIVES VIGNETTE

The lights come up on stage left revealing an executive office situated many stories above the ground. A sign reading "Bookend Publishing Co." is visible. Mr. Bookend is seated at his desk going through some papers. He pushes a button on his desk. A crack of unintelligible static answers him.

BOOK: Miss Meatsworth, will you come in here, please?

MEAT: (enters) Yes, Mr. Bookend?

BOOK: Take a dictation, please. (He gets up from his desk and begins pacing about the room.) Looking back in retrospect over my past history, I find my life terribly horrible and without any definite meaning. Therefore, I choose to end it. (Climbs out on ledge.) Respectfully, Bernard Bookend. (He readies himself to jump, then pauses.) Will you read that back, please?

MEAT: (Begins to read, then pauses.) If you don't mind my saying so, sir, it seems awfully redundant.

BOOK: Redundant?

MEAT: Yes, sir. I mean, all this about "looking back in retrospect." Retrospect is a looking back, sir. And "past history." History is **already** past, sir. And a life that's horrible is already terrible and meaning is usually definite and so forth. Frankly, I think it needs revision, sir. If you don't mind my saying so.

BOOK: (Sits down on ledge and scratches his chin.) Yes, Miss Meatsworth, I think you have a point. Get Feltpip on the phone. He's the best editor we have.

She dials Feltpip's office. The lights come up on stage right revealing Feltpip standing on a ledge preparing himself to jump. His secretary is seated near his desk, taking dictation. She answers the phone.

SECT: Mr. Bookend's office, Mr. Feltpip.

FELT: How inconvenient. Is it important?

SECT: Quite urgent, sir.

FELT: (Climbs in from ledge.) Very well, then. (Picks up phone, listens carefully, nodding his head.) Yes, that's terrible wording. Needs a complete rewrite. Just a sec. (Motions to his secretary who hands him his own dictation. He reads the words.) The mightiest of empires vanish in silent whispers, for in the end, silence triumphs over all. I go to embrace this silence. How's that?

Meatsworth reads the dictation to Bookend who is seated on the ledge casually rocking back and forth, humming.

BOOK: Excellent! I knew that Feltpip would go far. Miss Meatsworth, have twenty copies of that run off and sent to all departments.

MEAT: (to Feltpip) Mr. Bookend says it's fine, sir.

FELT: Excellent! He always had an ear for fine prose.

They hang up the phones.

FELT: (to his secretary) Have twenty copies of that run off and sent to all departments.

Both executives jump out of their windows. As the lights begin to fade, the only sound on stage is the clacking of two typewriters which continues for several seconds in total darkness. Then all is silent.

--James A. Crisci

## THE HEISENBERG UNCERTAINTY PRINCIPLE

(You can only see them by looking where they aren't)

Observe this electron cloud, lightly,  
As in the looking

                                You charge it  
To further unstable levels.

No synthetic spectrum  
Can divide such photon blurs  
or position them precisely,

                                In any graph.

So likewise we abide.

--Paul A. Trimble

## BLUE SHIFT

In this age  
there is no limit but light  
our eyes can stand  
    the incredible blue rushes toward us  
    our centers reel  
    from the shocks we make.

Looking backward, the past scenes  
tinge to red. The fallen photographs  
begin to yellow now  
    one last look back, taking  
    what we can remember.

Even the lightest load becomes massive.  
The very thoughts seem to carry  
great weight. Yet here  
    in this small beginning  
    the things we carry do not  
    make us slow  
    as they might seem to do.

We move like ions in the night  
of ghostly stars  
a faint path left to track us  
    while the world condenses  
    in a ring  
    at the periphery  
    like dew.

--Jim Beall



# SIGHT

The lines in his face were lines of agony.  
I could almost trace his thoughts, especially

around the eyes and mouth, it's there life takes  
it's toll, as if our feeling's such it breaks

right through the skin and I can tell, oh yes,  
my fingers have been my eyes for years, unless

you'd call ears, eyes too; mine are. I see  
with every working part God gave me.

I've found more kinds of sight in my being  
than most discover in a lifetime of seeing

with two good eyes wide open; anyway,  
I get on as well as most. Today

I knew it was going to rain before I heard  
the first drops hit the pane, my word,

I already had the window shut and let  
the cat in, she fusses so when I forget.

Lord! Listen to me go on

It was close to dawn. I could tell  
it was getting light. I hadn't slept well

all night something kept me awake  
but I didn't move or make

a sound. When the bed shook  
he turned his head toward me and took

his last breath.

God, it burned my cheek!  
And for the first time in my life

I was afraid of the dark.

--Saundra Mauley

## SONNET

Now when the leaves are driven from their trees  
    To huddle like refugees about the hunchback roots;  
Now when the burning thatch begins to freeze  
    And windburn cauterizes next year's shoots;  
Even now the world most advances upon our lives  
    And the sun-sown warmth is uprooted from our pores:  
As the light retreats from shadow, shadow drives  
    Deep across the field -- we feel its force.

The force of what I cannot feel, the damage  
    We must build on, tempts me from thriving.

The trees camp at the pond-edge, surviving.

On the water's surface, in my image  
    Leaves surround my face, leaf-fingers clutch.

An acorn falls. I ripple at its touch.

--Bill Lloyd

## A MEXICAN BALLADE

Late afternoons before the men were back  
From the fields, we stepped naked in the river,  
Your loosened hair down your shoulders a black  
Waterfall yellow butterflies quivered  
Near: a painting by Gauguin. I shivered  
Standing in the water in the sun,  
Was lost until I heard you call out, "Come"  
In Spanish, swam upstream to the river's bend,  
Drifted down past summer's latest blossoms,  
Not knowing that the summer had to end.

As purple evening shaded into black,  
We traced a path laced by the moon's slivered  
Light to the maize field; we lay on our backs  
In silence, watched the moon glaze the withering  
Stalks. Below, among the ferns along the river  
John, silent, shared a smoke with Susan.  
When we came down, John said, "You have a friend,"  
And gazed on us with the jealousy of one  
Who was certain that the summer would end.

That night I danced with Tomas to a cracked  
"La Morena." The patio glimmered  
And you remembered a trip a long while back  
To Mexico where your father never  
Again will let you go; "He sees men quiver  
When you pass," I think, and think of summer gone  
And how I must return home to the end,  
It seems, of summer! Fields fade to autumn;  
How could I think that summer would not end?

Ten years have passed, Ramona, and I've come  
South once more for another summer's sun,  
Don't look for you--old perhaps with children  
In the valley where Rio Sapo runs--  
Friend who taught me that summer does not end.

--Nancy Prothro

## SECOND CHANCE

If I watered the begonia,  
it wouldn't grow any faster,  
it wouldn't die any faster.  
If I moved it to the light,  
it would brown.  
If I didn't move it to the light,  
it would brown.  
They die, I throw them outside under the bush.  
I sit in the chair, eyes closed,  
seeing black with yellow specks.

A fog parts:  
a sword hinged from a tree.  
I step on the rocks,  
toss them over the cliff.  
Their crash shakes the earth, the tree.  
The sword drops into my hand,  
the hilt fits the curve between my thumb and finger.  
I hold it away, ease it into my chest.  
The skin rips, my blood fires,  
falls.

I open my eyes.  
From the chair I discover  
a sliver of light from the window,  
a sway of the shadow of the bushes on the shade.  
The leaves hold to their branches and dance.

--Joyce Merritt

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## MEET ME AT THE WELL

There was a day when we said goodbye,  
Prepared for Paris, prepared for touch-me-nots,  
But not prepared for contact.  
I stood quite still.

My love is like a well.  
My simile is a metaphor.  
You held my eyes.  
They became two wells.  
Meet me at the well.  
I promise not to linger.

You brought me books and did not want them back.  
You gave me coffee and the cup looked like a well.  
I tried to stand, but fell.  
I tried to look enticing. You left the room.  
Meet me at the well.  
I promise not to cry.

When I saw her in the library,  
She looked like Venus.  
You were Adonis.  
I was the horse.  
Pegasus, wasn't it? The broken foot.  
Meet me at the well.  
I promise to be strong.

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You were tall and tapdanced through your sonnets.  
You held milk and warm honey to my arid lips.  
I burped. You left the room.  
Meet me at the well.  
I promise to learn the word "goodbye."

I told you that snow would shine in April,  
If there was you.  
You looked annoyed.  
A symphony played,  
But there was no music.  
Meet me at the well.  
I promise to be sane.

I brought you a rose.  
You called me outrageous.  
The bloom was desire.  
I brought you a gift.  
You slammed the door.  
I brought you my body.  
You left the room.

You are going now, goodbye.  
And you did not meet me at the well.  
You gave me something.  
You gave me a metaphor.  
I said "Love."  
You said "Is a well."  
I said "desire."  
The metaphor was silence.

--Cindy Toneman

# CANADIAN FAITH

## 1

Linde did not believe Madison's blue '64 Mustang existed.

-But you've ridden in it!

-Ridden in it proves nothing. It's just not there.

Madison's mother was afraid of Linde, never spoke to her directly but whispered in the kitchen,

-She doesn't like my orange slacks, does she?

-Of course she does!

She didn't.

They traveled every summer, bought Wonder bread thin sliced and Danish ham for sandwiches. Linde fiddled with the radio dials and held Madison's coke until he wanted it. She kept her secret because nobody wanted it. It watered in her hands.

He majored in Law. She dreamt Metaphysics. He was deep but afraid of power.

John loved power. His jackets were black leather covered with zippers and chrome studs or deepgrey pin-striped. He was constantly hooked up and afraid of Linde.

John said playfully,

-Anything can exist.

Madison said,

-No.

Linde and I smile. We were made for each other.

I listen to Linde and lay on my back being clouds, being space.

-What about Time?

John watches Errol Flynn board a spanish merchant.

-I often worry about Time.

The swords and the hooks bleed into the Cid charging down an empty beach amid ghost chants of Alla Alla Alla!

-John, you're in love with Time.

-Yea? You're crazy.

-Tell me a story.

(John's fragment)

Windhover Harry lives on the desert, Bright man, mid-50's, grizzly and thick like Moses. He used to be a prospector although he never sought gold or any

other thing like that. He just enjoyed the hot sun and lightbrown shifting landscapes.

-This is after the cities die?

-Almost.

He likes to walk carefully and soft, feet ragwrapped and freyedged, jeans dragging. He carries a white canvas newspaper bag stuffed with dry food and junk, rocks and funny bits of wood, occasional snakeskin or something to smoke.

-Like mine?!

-No. This one exists.

And an old M1 rifle strapped taut across his back, to give him some sense of adventure.

-A rifle?

-Yes. A rifle.

-He must be very lonely.

-Yes. He is very lonely but he has never had a friend and can't identify his suffering. You finish.

Nothing happens except there is always nostalgic rock music running through his head but he's never heard rock music so he doesn't recognize that either and the sun just gets deeper and hotter and nobody photographs his reptilian skin.

-That isn't a story at all!

John says, brushing some grass out of his hair. I choose a spear and twist it in the sun. The light feels like hot fingers pressing through my eyes into my brain.

-A story?

I think.

(a story, I think)

Linde had said,

-Well, let's go to Canada.

It was summer again, hairy and unbaptized and bothering the windows (inciting the conditioned cool to Whizz and Whip through the wallcracks and under doors, Poof!). Linde lagged and yearned and couldn't get to work anymore.

Madison went to work everyday. Madison's rich, an attorney,



he comes home at five, pops into the vacuum. We're cramped in the kitchen tossing salad and lighting up (breaking stringbeans with my mother, the table's enameled white, or like Norsemen at night all sat in a circle and listening to Beowulf).

Madison says,

-Ah! My artistic circle!

a sort of transition from his head to mine, peripheral acceptance. I smile back the same, chunking tomatoes with a heavy knife. He kisses Linde, whispering,

-Lets make it Canada this year.

And leaves to hang up his jacket.

And Linde says, whispering across the table,

-Well let's go to Canada.

-Canada!

Linde says,

-is beautiful and cool and still

(but it's an interesting stillness like shivering still, not the absolute unmodulated deadness of asphalt or tar.)

-Canada!

Linde says,

-is Alive!

and the trees (she smiles spreading her arms big)

-the trees are gigantic.

I watch Linde speak and I watch her move. She moves and speaks like a hundred birds abstractly co-ordinated.

Linde and Madison live on the Hill, a townhouse, prestigious. The frame's 18th century historical document, the brickred bleeding into parchment chalk, the doors freshly painted with brass eagle knockers and handblown glass windows decorously barred.

Images twist in handblown glass.

The house belongs in November (leaves spotted and striped like lions and tigers, a crispiness bursting through Lincoln Park and sizzling on the blackiron porchrails). I arrived in November, blowing in like 3 dozen leaves and settling to crumble in the front yard.

It isn't November.

I live in the attic, raw wood. I've poisted the bed level with the window, filled

the window with plants and pots like anybody's treehouse. I pretend it's on stilts and gaze out the window like an H.G. Wells Martian. (I imagine Linde naked and shivering in the crispiness).

I sit on the floor in a corner with my back to the wall, smelling the renovation; sawdust and paint; camp meetings and brain damage.

Harry's sitting on the bed smoking a big cigar. I say,

-Hello Harry.

The smoke's thick and burning. I shake my head like a big plastic fire-truck, just a few gears and sound effects in vacuous space, much simpler than a transistor radio.

Harry dissolves.

John's sitting on the bed leafing through a magazine. He thinks that he's leafing through me but it's only a magazine. I buy strange magazines for John to leaf through. He sits on the bed and we don't talk.

John and I used to talk. Kid talk, short words and long spaces like kids on the beach hunting shells, looking up to see if they're alone, to say,

-Look! See what I've found!

and then sinking back, relaxed, reassured.

But the children become self-assured, dashing foam in wild circles around and around and suddenly it's dark and achingly brutal and the boardwalk just drunks and electric dreaming.

-John, see what I've found?

But John has dissolved.

Harry must live in Monument Valley. I'll suppose his snuggled self deep into rock on some dark afternoon before rain (always before rain because that's how old memory gets) wrapped in a sweep of fur and Granite and the smell of rain (the color of memory, all color washed out, deep grey) and antelopes pounding the earth, and cold, and clouds chasing, spilling themselves like an opening hand into the sky's farther corners.

The rain doesn't recognize seasons. Just peripheral acceptance.

And Harry watches the independent sky, waiting but without any sense of it. Watching with dusk in his eyes (felt eyes on the tips of seen fingers) a flare in the sky, a spot on the iris, a star falling out of the thunder.

Harry suffers from racial amnesia (coasting in circles on the grey starless sky like motorbike daredevils in **Roustabout** but this sky is physical like smokey

formica or searing ice under the razor-skate screaming up powdery mist) a star falling out of the thunder.

Harry senses he may be cliché. He assumes an appropriate inflection and destroys that sense.

Harry senses his inflection's cliché. He destroys himself and begins senselessly rebuilding.

Harry was educated in Boston. He isn't a stupid cowboy.

Madison was educated in Boston too. Madison was very smart like a young Orson Wells. His teachers said,

-Madison, you're a real smart cookie!

and,

-Madison, you're a real Whizz Bang!

Madison knew what he was but he thought it was secret. I say,

-Madison, there are many many secrets. There are 10 million secrets. I'm only guessing though. I say,

-Madison, pass the asparagus.

2

John sits in the library, behind a big table, cleaning his pistol. It's a flintlock, a pirate pistol. He points it,

-Stand and deliver!

He laughs. He likes fear but I know he likes courage. I grin courageously.

I'm bringing in lunch, grilled cheese and tomatoe with pickle spears on the side.

-How's Harry coming?

he's talking to me but he squints down the barrel, scratching its insides with a metal stick. I set the tray on the table and pour coke into glasses.

Flintlocks are nicer than other guns. They go Poof! before they go Boom! They go Poof! Boom! and then they're silent, finished. They don't overdo it.

And you can shoot different things from a flintlock like nails and BBs. Once we shot Tic Taks, white ones. They traced an arc through the night air. And if you stuff it with powder the flintlock shoots fire and shakes in your hand. That's a lot of fun.

I shoot the flintlock. It's John's gun of course but mostly I shoot it. He cleans it and so forth because he likes me to go shooting with him. John likes to brandish the flintlock but he shoots a pump-action shotgun. It goes Boomchugga Boomchugga Boom!

I can't appreciate that.

We go shooting at Mik's. Mik lives on a farm, 20 acres, 2 horses, a goat and some chickens. The goat is named "Fetching" and gives good milk. The horses are "Peter" and "Helga". The chickens aren't named because Mik isn't silly. He says,

-Life is a serious business.

Assuming a serious tone, I say

-Linde's asked John and I to Canada.

-That's serious?

-I think so.

We're shooting behind the barn, John, Mik, and I, across the corral. There's some wind and the place is all dusty. Mik drops two shells into his shotgun and snaps it shut hard like Doc Holiday. He dresses like Holiday, black vest and worn suitcoat. He chews a cigar. It's really ridiculous.

John thinks it's ridiculous too. He thinks it's OK but ridiculous.

Mik says,

-How's Harry coming?

but he isn't listening. He's hugged the gunbutt against his shoulder. He says,

-I think you should go.

Evening, storm gathering, everything cooling down, hissing and crickets. I lean against the barn's side and tear a beer off the plastic stem.

John and Mik in the kitchen talking to Andy (Mik's wife). Talking loud and even laughing now and then. Andy comes to a window, fills a doorway (opening the screen to let the dog out.

adrift in the scattering edges of kitchen glow.

the dog walks in circles close to the house and barks at the vacant rain gutters.) I might have hunted with this dog. We might have bred one another.

(the dog moves out of the light to piss then trots to the backdoor and scratches) I don't know this dog. I don't understand dogs that piss in the dark.

I piss in the dark against the barn's side and move a few steps and sit down again, out of the view of the house.

Madison sits in the frontroom reading. He reads a lot and lounges in the frontroom, in the little pools of orange light like warm subterranean mineral baths. He reads Time Magazine and Newsweek. His feet propt on the dark-wood coffee table. Sinking.

I can enter the sky. (some men fishing off a bridge, taut lines, no buildings

or trees to keep them out of the sky, they look like balloons, flecks of color random in space.)

Skyhold swims through the space like a silver-tint cloud where the air becomes thin and freezing. The windows are dark like the lenses that hide famous people. Her eyes would be watery-blue and mystify children.

I peek in the windows; a room of blonde furniture rift by a stripe of steel deck. (The inmates are kept in the basement, the attendants in limbo until they're needed.) It's quiet like a church on Mondays.

I crawl in the windows. I sit in the chairs and sit cups on the tables. I've come to free Sull, to let him escape, to lure the Collector into Monument Valley. It isn't a personal matter. I have to give Harry something to do.

Madison's eyes are light brown and swampy. John says,  
-There's nothing behind them.

John's eyes are blue-grey opaque. He drinks tea and chain smokes. I say,  
-You're free Sull!

As if Sull was making us tea in the kitchen. I whisper. I really don't want him to hear.

The Collector is black like a bulky shadow. His shadow-boots ring on the stainless deck. He paces his breath by that ring and he paces his thought by that breath. It is a new breath with the smell of blood still in it because the Collector is a new man. He was born for his task. He is goal oriented.

He listens to space and the random occurrences in space. He listens for Sull (a fleck of untethered color and sound falling). He thinks,  
-Sull?

He thinks very loud and scatters his thought through the storm. It sounds like the storm and smells like rain and dissolves.

Dissolution unnerves the Collector who continues to think,

-Sull?

only because

-Sull?

is his only thought.

Sull, Jacob D., was sentenced to life on Skyhold for making his fours wrong. Sull wasn't a scientist involved in engineering Skyhold. He wasn't a scientist at all. He said,

-Man didn't destroy himself.

He said,

-Some men destroyed some other men, that's all.

Sull made his fours like this: 4 and he wouldn't make them any other way.



He said,

-I won't make them any other way. It's a question of inflection.

Sull could have made his fours like this: 4. He could have stayed home with his wife and children. The court said,

-Think of your wife and children!

But he thought,

-It doesn't matter much one way or the other.

Sull became something of a folk-figure. People talked about the famous Sull four. They talked in whispers and giggled. (They giggled in whispers too.) But no one remembered how to make one. It was forgotten.

I've cleared the attic, shoved the desk and dresser into the hall, slid the bed downstairs, thrown the books and the plants out the window. (People mull on the frontlawn and browse through the titles.)

I'm making Sull fours. Big ones out of plex-glass and lumber. Small ones out of bent hangerwire and cardboard tubing. I'm painting Sull fours on the wall in acrylic green and yellow, in blue on the ceiling, in red on the floor.

Linde sits on the floor in a corner with her back to the wall. She's crying. I've told her the tragedy of Sull.

The craft Sull took had no windows. It didn't have a video cassette. It wasn't intended for procreated humans or pleasure cruises. Tickertape machines fed out coded data.

Sull could feel the spin and fall. He was trapped in a process. He tapped a few buttons. (He heard the Collector and closed himself tight)

I sit on the floor and reflect; nothing's turned out quite right and Linde won't stop crying. I say,

-Stop crying Linde. Help me make Sull fours.

Linde says Madison won't understand.

(The people on the frontlawn have wandered inside. They think it's an eviction or a rummage sale) but we're pretty much alone. Linde hasn't washed her hair and I want to touch her but I don't. I watch her. (Her tears are the miraculous tears of a statue. People come to wash their hair in her tears.) She says,

-Something's gotta happen.

And she goes downstairs to chase the people out.

John's in the frontroom selling a Stifle lamp for 35 dollars. Linde says,

-John, go help Alan make Sull fours.

I have to smile. It's become a conspiracy.

Harry drifts across the desert floor absently. He thinks,  
-I'll follow my star until I find it.  
A melody accompanies this thought and Harry skips a few steps.

3

Madison's Mustang is blue re-paint. It has a three speed on the column with a dirty white interior and saggy front seats with broken springs poking out. It sits on the street among the Volvos and Mercedes like Faye Dunaway crossing her legs.

Madison's mother says,  
-Honey, you still driving that car?  
She peels potatoes in a blue-grey house dress. The peelings fall into the skirt like brown rain sagging an old tar roof.  
-You got money now. You don't got to drive that car.  
She drops the potato chunks into a steel pot.

Madison stands on the fire-escape chewing a piece of american cheese. He stands like Caesar, detached, above the alley.

He washes his car in the alley on Sundays. He lathers it up with a sponge as big as a bible and sprays it down with a green garden hose. The lather and dirt and water stream down the alley like whip cream tears and out of Madison's life.

Linde stands on the fire-escape eating an apple while Madison's mother makes iced tea and sings "Old Man River". Linde knows it will rain and the dust will stick on the Mustang, like tired flies. It happens again and again.

John watches TV. He watches fish bowls. He watches men tossing pizza dough into the air. It hangs in the air and spins slow. Everything spins slow on Sundays and most of the plaza is closed.

We walked quickly, nervously, uptempo orchestrated, heads bent forward. We've always been conspirators. It has to do with John's idea of history which is:

History is the Produce of Conspirators

AKA:

The Conspiratorial Theory of History

There's a lot to be said both for and against this theory. John whispers but he seldom giggles. He watches himself in shop windows.

It's started to rain a fine acid mist and the world is suddenly drained of color as if a gunman just blew a hole in the heart of the world and it suddenly remembered that it hadn't told anyone,

-I love you.

The rain is like a whip driving free horses. We take cover in a hardware store and buy buckshot. John talks to the man about hardware and guns.

The rain is like buckshot.

We drink chocolate sodas at Peoples. The sodas are cold and freeze our lungs like a terrorist rain. John says,  
-I'm getting pissed at this rain.

The cashier at Brentanno's says,

-A really nice rain, isn't it?

She studies my purchases:

**176 Illustrations of the Pueblo Rain Bird and  
A Study of the Blue Re-Painted '64 Mustang as American Icon.**

Both are oversized and mostly pictures. The cashier shakes her head,  
-Man is trapped in a pissmire of formula,  
she says. But it doesn't bother me. It doesn't bother John either. He says,  
-You're just a fucking cashier at Brentanno's.

It really bothers Madison that life doesn't resemble Time Magazine.

John resembles a brother in Syracuse except that John's smile is faster. John has a very fast smile. If smiles were guns then John would be the Sundance Kid and his smile would shoot a hole in the heart of the world.

John and I went to Canada once but we only got as far as Philadelphia.

There is a beautiful park in Philadelphia which is a rocky hill overlooking a smoked glass river. It used to be a fort watching the river and the river was a street that armies walked down. The armies were bright red and the snow that fell on the armies was pale rose petals until it touched flesh and melted into blood and spread into the river.

And then the fort became the ruins of a fort like an old man on a bench watching children that aren't his children or even his grandchildren. And the children aren't afraid of the old man but they've been told not to talk to him.

And then the old man became a Cathedral of tall trees and broken stones like a city with ghettos of flowers and streets of its own to watch. And it didn't watch the river anymore.

There's a fresh water spring in the park that plays through rock melody through a hometown band. And people come to wash their hair in the melody and drink it from paper cups. They sit in the grass like rocks and listen to the water.



John and I sit in the grass and fidget, crunching on pretzels.

Madison and Linde and Madison's mother sit at one end of the dining room table like three heavy beads on a string loop. The table is cherrywood with cherrywood chairs. The silver is silver and the china is china. The old lady prays,

-Bless us oh Lord,  
and Linde is sad for a moment,  
-and these thy gifts,  
but it passes,  
-which we are about to receive,  
and everyone says,  
-Amen.

4

We loaded the car in the morning that still seems like night. That always reminds me of the Washington Post which I used to deliver at 4:30 AM wearing long thermal underwear and rubber boots. That's not the conceptual Washington Post but the warm paper and smeary ink on your hands; the real thing.

Madison would never help. He doesn't wake easily and he said,  
-Forty dollars a month!  
meaning the Post didn't pay well.  
-You're mentally sick!  
he said. He said that a lot. He said it with this tone of tolerant authority and shock,  
-You're mentally sick!  
as if he had just discovered the fact and it somehow surprised him or confirmed his suspicions. But then he learned to say,  
-You're mentally unhealthy,  
which comes with tone included.  
-It's progressive,  
says Madison. And he likes to be progressive. He says,  
-I'm quietly progressive,  
and nods his head agreeing with himself.  
I say,  
-Madison, you're a hurricane in a trashcan.  
He likes those kinds of observations. He likes to think that someone knows him.

We stuffed sleeping bags and chubby flight bags into the trunk and it had to be closed firmly. Madison and John argued about how to tie the stuff down on top. Madison wanted to hunt through the basement for the cloth belts that had come with the roof-rack. John said,  
-Fuck that!

and used some light twine. Madison said,

-Fuck you!

and kind of wanders around the dark yard acting busy and pissed, very pissed. He smokes in the dark. He looks through his change and counts the bills in his wallet. He thinks,

-I have some authority.

He thinks,

-They ought to respect me.

He mumbles and lurks, sketchy shadow in the cigarette glow (in the shadow of the house and out of the way of the moon).

The moon doesn't search for Madison.

In the winter it snows and the snow is a whore's mirror and the moon is a beautiful whore like Kamala who loved Siddhartha but was a whore anyway. But in the summer the ground is dark and the moon is estranged from itself.

The moon falls like a wedge of ice through the frontroom window.

Linde sits in the frontroom and listens to the radio skip from station to station. She sits in a naugahide recliner and dreams. I imagine Linde dreams of leaping through the attic window, through the glass shattering, and falls like an african spear onto the concrete sidewalk. (head shattering into a million thoughts, the thoughts scamper about the street,

-what happened?

-where am I?

and flee in a million directions.)

The street is empty and cold. A traffic light changes from green to red, red to green, green to red.

Upside-down erect and glued to the pavement (I imagine) Linde continues to dream. She dreams she is the virginal guest of honor at a magicians convention in Cincinnati. She pops out of a cake and is repeatedly butchered with trick knives.

Linde looks for me in the half-light among the devils and bears.

Linde could have been a cave-woman and I could have been a cave-man and we could have lived and bred in a cave with Mik's dog and a big fire. Or she could have been a dancer. But she isn't. I could say,

-Linde is all this and more!

But she isn't. In fact, she isn't any of these things and I can't imagine what she dreams.

When John comes to the door it's just light, a blue tinge and the sun soft and fuzzy. Linde isn't virginal but she's soft and pretty and still very young. John says,

-Everthings ready to go.  
Linde says nothing, so I say,  
-OK,  
and pick up my jacket, a bright red slicker.

It's cool in the morning. I could stand in the morning all day but the morning dissolves. It burns away.

Madison sits in the idling Mustang and copes with himself.

Harry sits in the dirt and considers dissolution. He weaves a bead vest and watches Sull's boat glow white hot. He thinks,

-It looks like a star.

But he wonders. And as he wonders it looks less and less like a star. And he wonders what it is. And he thinks,

-It's easier to consider dissolution,  
and resumes his considerations and his bead vest.

Sull wonders where he is. He thinks,

-Where am I?

-What's happening?

He thinks he's confused. He's right. He's hopelessly confused. He has no windows and he can't read ticker-tape. He says,

-What kind of a planet is this?

No one answers.

I leave a note on the kitchen table next to the loaded flintlock. It says,  
Hello Harry,

Just thought you  
might be needing this.

Alan

5

Linde stands in the doorway. Her boots are tan and her skirt is too big. She holds herself in the doorway like a young paratrooper in a high wind. She's crying again. This must be romance.

I say,

-Everything's alright,

and reach out my hand like an angel. It's a pink hand intended more for gestures than grappling. I put it in my pocket like a bunch of marbles.

I stow myself snug in the back behind Linde's hair, grassy intanglement newly washed (feeling excited; anticipated travel and so forth). John sits behind Madison. John says,

-We're going to Canada.!

The words strike the air and are smothered. They turn into a question like a glass being emptied and disappear. No one answers.

I feel like an angel racing through heaven.

The Collector, drifting through heaven, thinks

-Monument Valley!

And an image is soundlessly projected into Monument Valley, an image of dusty black boots and pearl handled revolvers. The Collector slips into his image like a man leaping onto a train.

Or maybe the Collector wraps himself in an image of Monument Valley like camel's hair cape train.

He touches his guns, feeling the weight. He feels the dry air fill his lungs like a sponge. His gunfighter eyes catch Harry, 45 feet of sand, dry bones and Sull, climbing out of his shell all wrinkly and covering his eyes, is caught like a holograph betwixt lasers.

Sull is all white-meat and tortured, tormented by desert and a fairly low opinion of himself.

Harry hesitates. He thinks,

-I shouldn't hesitate!

But he does. And he thinks,

-It's over.

He squinches his eyes closed and grinds his teeth. They're just a few teeth like the charred stumps of trees, smoldering trees, burning cities and screams. But his mother is close, her face spun through clouds but her hands hot and clutching his hands hot and clutching the flintlock. She says,  
-It's alright now. We're safe.

-Because nothing has happened!

Harry remembers. He opens his eyes. The Valley is vast and tan and silent as a metal drum waiting to echo. Harry thinks,

-I'm an echo!

He thinks,

-I'm an echo!

The Collector is motionless, a piece of the Valley mounted for Harry. A piece of black porcelain waiting to have it's picture snapped.

Harry has to smile. He isn't restrained by the ritual. His moment's a floating decimal. He raises the flintlock. He feels like an angel racing through heaven.

It must be Sunday. The streets are empty. People peer through their blinds as we jet through the city in a hush.

John watches the city dancing white-water. It dances a ballroom dance, a music box ballet. And John's eyes are full of applause.

And Madison has to drive, watching his mirrors and shifting his gears. A good string of green lights goes yellow and red, an eyebrow dips hard into second. Out guts jolt and brake still.

The traffic lights red like a thirty car pile-up.

The traffic lights red like a pile of unopened mail.

John's eyes are spinning confetti.

The traffic lights red but the crosswalk has just flashed  
-Don't Walk  
and John fills Madison's mirror and Madison's color is gone.

Harry squeezes the trigger and the Collector's head bursts like a loaded pinada. The whole car smells of sulphur and blood and Madison's brains are splattered over the windshield like stardust and the windshield is shattered like a star and I imagine the windshield and Madison's brains become a new constellation and sail into heaven.

We scrape his brains off the windshield and pack them back into his head. His head is like sea shells imbedded in beach cliff.

Linde goes to the drugstore for Windex. She buys a postcard, some comics and a pair of sunglasses. The postcard says,

Mom,  
Madison's dead again.

She'll like it that Linde said,  
-Mom,  
And she'll like the pretty pictures of boats in a harbor.

6

Somewhere in Philadelphia a large metal sign says,  
Carl's All Day Parking \$3.75

The sign says this all year without holidays, both day and night and regardless of weather. If the sign stopped for coffee or to catch its breath then Carl would get a new sign. Linde says,  
-This is the place we've been looking for!  
She gives Carl \$4 and he parks Madison in a very nice spot.  
-Lots of sun here!

says Carl. And Linde says,

-Carl seems like a very nice man. I'm really glad that we found him.

Carl gives us directions to the park. We catch the cross-town, a mini-bus, reading the liquor ads and faces of brave Philadelphians.

-This is the home of Liberty.

I say. And John says,

-He didn't have the stamina to make it to Canada.

-And he never existed,

adds Linde, adjusting her sunglasses, smiling and curling down into the seat like a seed being swallowed.

And John and I sit like two large trees tied to a hammock. We can feel the dirty city.

Harry builds a fire and brews strong coffee. The stars are stuck in the sky like nutty candy. The moon is ice cream melting. Sull drinks it with both hands, breathing the hot steam. His breath is like steam and smells like coffee.

- What's over the mountains?

he wants to know.

But Harry doesn't know what's over the mountains. He doesn't even understand the question.

--Stephen Paugh



## EMPTY

The late afternoons  
darken this house.  
I wonder where the day  
went and when  
I will find the time  
to do so much living  
before I live  
for another.

Still at night I dream  
of patting my eight-month belly,  
skin stretched taut and smooth  
holding in the warmth  
for the new one.  
She is delivered in smiles.  
She is dark like me.  
She is Laura of the Sonnets.  
My child, your daughter.

The morning light follows  
the flat unbroken  
landscape of my body.  
I swallow another pill,  
take on the world,  
watch the wrinkles  
settle by my eyes.

--Patty Mitchell

# ANKHESENPAATON

May you spend a million years, you who love  
Thebes, sitting with your face  
to the North Winds, you two eyes beholding  
happiness.

--the wish of Tutankhamun's cup

Selket holds out her arms and averts her face;  
this is the ceremony of state.  
The kneeling woman is in her place,  
the ivory tongued leopard and the ibex wait,  
eyes of lapis lazuli, quartz, and slate  
watch lidless. The dung beetles whisper;  
the lotus and papyrus mate:  
they are lovers, who never were.

The still-born son and daughter displace  
whatever injury, whatever fate  
was destined for him. With appropriate grace  
she has handed him the arrow. The great  
king pours water through her hands to illustrate  
his riches or the rains. The vial is amber  
plainly shaped, the silver pomegranate was too ornate.  
They are lovers who never were.

Put oil in the alabaster vase:  
the hour is late.  
It's half-opened buds seem to trace  
an ocean floor of jade,  
(the last lights begin to fade)  
the stillness of invisible water  
where the dragonflies can skate.  
They are lovers who never were.

Remember, Prince of Egypt, they erased  
a name to carve yours here, and the mirror  
of your majesty was not your face.  
We are lovers who never were.

--Ruthellen Quillen



# MARCELLO

Marcello is a tight-rope walker. His father and grandfather were also tight-rope walkers. Many of the people you might see working in the smaller travelling circuses are somehow related to him, some of the more famous tight-rope walkers are his cousins.

They all know that Marcello is the best tight-rope walker of all, as was his father before him. Marcello was brought up in the circus. From the time he could barely walk, his father taught him to walk the tight-rope. At first he practiced on a heavy steel cable only a few inches off the ground. By the time he was five, he was practicing on the lighter steel cable used by the older tight-rope walkers. When he was eight he became part of the act. He used a long balancing pole, and would walk close to his father. Even when he was eight, everybody knew that Marcello would be the greatest. He walked across the rope more like a cat than a boy. Every muscle in his slender body seemed to be working to defy the rope.

Some people thought that Marcello made tight-rope walking look too easy. They said that he was too good and that the people in the audience would lose interest. They said that Marcello should pretend to lose his balance to force some gasps of excitement from the crowd. But, Marcello did not listen to them. He did not care about the crowd. He only cared about walking the tight-rope.

Even though he soon became the best tight-rope walker around, he would spend all his free time practicing and perfecting his technique. People said "Marcello, why work on the tight-rope all day? Why don't you go out and have some fun?" But, Marcello didn't listen. He enjoyed the tight-rope. It was his life.

As Marcello got older, he got better and better. He continually reduced the thickness of the cable until it was only the thickness of the cable-guidewires used by most tight-rope walkers. The people in the circus were afraid that Marcello was using too fine a wire. They were afraid that it would give way under his weight. But, Marcello was a cat. He walked the wire like a great ballet dancer walks upon the stage. Every step he made was perfect. The wire hardly felt his weight.

Marcello was not satisfied. He analyzed and refined every movement his body made. His mind was engrossed with every step. He could no longer hear or see the crowd or hear the circus music. He became one with the wire. And now, Marcello does not need the wire at all. He walks across the air. The people in the stands do not believe that he is walking on air. They think that it is some kind of trick. They think that the wire is so fine that it can't be seen from the stands far below it.

But, Marcello does not care what the people think. He only cares about perfecting his art and about teaching it to his son who will soon be old enough to walk the heavy steel cable.

--Bruce Schachter

## SUNSET ON THE ATLANTIC COAST

Past the past and past the present,  
past summer and September,  
the days continue as the sun continues  
across the beach, the ridge, the shoreline trees,  
and the trees beyond.

And beyond this,  
beyond these waves returning past  
the last leaves turning to fall,  
falls a limitless night.  
And so it comes to this. This is the movement  
and the motion is constant: what spins  
is a sun that falls like a circle  
between two points. The days,  
like the waves, repeat us.  
And the sun sets.  
Splash.

The tide comes in  
and the sky is a sea that darkens.

--Diana Vance

## ASYLUM

Begin on sand  
where the colors  
crash blue white  
green and gray.  
Follow tan  
up out of the sea  
half the quarter mile  
to Sound.

In the center  
of the sound  
of lapping waters  
it is blue  
as the buzz  
of bottleflies,  
blood hum  
of the chokecherries.

A spider whirrs  
and hangs a fog  
on the bones  
of a cottonmouth.  
Think  
he died sleeping,  
turning a spiral  
perfect and pale

as a bleached whelk.  
Listen.  
Out of the Sound  
he came  
halfway to ocean,

and he and I,  
we hit like winds  
off two waters,

white clap  
and spume of sky  
where the north-north-east  
and the south winds meet  
and whirl  
on the point  
of the barrier reef.  
The cottonmouth dies down,

the thorned arms  
coil tighter.  
In the eye  
of a reef it is green  
gone deep to dusk and thicket,  
and the tides run colors of thorn.  
They wake to wind and the moons  
of red berries--

you wore it easy,  
Billy, over sands so far  
from water you laughed  
and called it madness,  
the wet white sail  
that wrapped you smooth  
as linen--

no.  
It is the center  
of the thicket  
where the blackest berry shines.

--Suzanne Marie Hobbs

## ON THE BUS

On the bus  
a woman with one twisted leg  
and a broken eye  
plays a tape cassette  
of gospel tunes.

She turns it up louder  
as the bus gets crowded  
singing:  
"Jesus Heals"  
No one knows quite what to do.

Until somewhere  
from the long back seat  
there is a laugh.

Soon  
we are all laughing.  
We are all healing.

--Judith Harris



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